#### NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

# STANDARDS FOR TRAINING AND FIELD PLACEMENT PROGRAMS IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

The mission of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) is to promote educationally and psychologically healthy environments for all children and youth by implementing research-based, effective programs that prevent problems, enhance independence, and promote optimal learning. This is accomplished through state-of-the-art research and training, advocacy, ongoing program evaluation, and caring professional service. The NASP Standards for Training and Field Placement Programs in School Psychology contribute to the development of effective services through the identification of critical training experiences and competencies needed by candidates preparing for careers in school psychology. These Standards serve to guide the design of school psychology graduate education by providing a basis for program evaluation and a foundation for the recognition of programs that meet national quality standards through the NASP program approval process.

#### I. PROGRAM CONTEXT/STRUCTURE

School psychology training is delivered within a context of program values and clearly articulated training philosophy/mission, goals, and objectives. Training includes a comprehensive, integrated program of study delivered by qualified faculty, as well as substantial supervised field experiences necessary for the preparation of competent school psychologists whose services positively impact children, youth, families, and other consumers.

- 1.1 The program provides to all candidates a clearly articulated training philosophy/mission, goals, and objectives. An integrated and sequential program of study and supervised practice clearly identified as being in school psychology and consistent with the program's philosophy/mission, goals, and objectives are provided to all candidates.
- 1.2 A commitment to understanding and responding to human diversity is articulated in the program's philosophy/mission, goals, and objectives and practiced throughout all aspects of the program, including admissions, faculty, coursework, practica, and internship experiences. Human diversity is recognized as a strength that is valued and respected.
- 1.3 Candidates have opportunities to develop an affiliation with colleagues, faculty, and the profession through a continuous full-time residency or alternative planned experiences.
- 1.4 The program possesses at least three full-time equivalent faculty. At least two faculty members (including the program administrator) shall hold the doctorate with specialization in school psychology and be actively engaged in school psychology as a profession (e.g., by possessing state and/or national credentials, having experience as a school psychologist, participating in professional school psychology associations, and/or contributing to research, scholarly publications, and presentations in the field). Other program faculty possess the doctoral degree in psychology, education, or a closely related discipline with a specialization supportive of their training responsibilities in the school psychology program.
- 1.5 The program provides, collaborates in, or contributes to continuing professional development opportunities for practicing school psychologists based on the needs of practitioners.

# REQUIREMENTS FOR SPECIALIST-LEVEL PROGRAMS ONLY (1.6-1.7)

- 1.6 Specialist-level programs consist of a minimum of three years of full-time study or the equivalent at the graduate level. The program shall include at least 60 graduate semester hours or the equivalent, at least 54 hours of which are exclusive of credit for the supervised internship experience. Institutional documentation of program completion shall be provided.
- 1.7 Specialist-level programs include a minimum of one academic year of supervised internship experience, consisting of a minimum of 1200 clock hours.

#### REQUIREMENTS FOR DOCTORAL PROGRAMS ONLY (1.8-1.10)

1.8 Doctoral programs provide greater depth in multiple domains of school psychology training and practice as specified in these standards (see Standard II).

(Note: Programs are encouraged to provide opportunities for doctoral study for practicing school psychologists and, to the greatest extent possible, credit for prior training.)

- 1.9 Doctoral programs consist of a minimum of four years of full-time study or the equivalent at the graduate level. The program shall include a minimum of 90 graduate semester hours or the equivalent, at least 78 of which are exclusive of credit for the doctoral supervised internship experience and any terminal doctoral project (e.g., dissertation) and shall culminate in institutional documentation.
- 1.10 Doctoral programs include a minimum of one academic year of doctoral supervised internship experience, consisting of a minimum of 1500 clock hours.

#### II. DOMAINS OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY TRAINING AND PRACTICE

School psychology candidates demonstrate entry-level competency in each of the following domains of professional practice. Competency requires both knowledge and skills. School psychology programs ensure that candidates have a foundation in the knowledge base for psychology and education, including theories, models, empirical findings, and techniques in each domain. School psychology programs ensure that candidates demonstrate the professional skills necessary to deliver effective services that result in positive outcomes in each domain. The domains below are not mutually exclusive and should be fully integrated into graduate level curricula, practica, and internship. Domains are more fully illustrated on Page 10.

- 2.1 **Data-Based Decision-Making and Accountability**: School psychologists have knowledge of varied models and methods of assessment that yield information useful in identifying strengths and needs, in understanding problems, and in measuring progress and accomplishments. School psychologists use such models and methods as part of a systematic process to collect data and other information, translate assessment results into empirically-based decisions about service delivery, and evaluate the outcomes of services. Data-based decision-making permeates every aspect of professional practice.
- 2.2 **Consultation and Collaboration**: School psychologists have knowledge of behavioral, mental health, collaborative, and/or other consultation models and methods and of their application to particular situations. School psychologists collaborate effectively with others in planning and decision-making processes at the individual, group, and system levels.
- 2.3 **Effective Instruction and Development of Cognitive/Academic Skills**: School psychologists have knowledge of human learning processes, techniques to assess these processes, and direct and indirect services applicable to the development of cognitive and academic skills. School psychologists, in collaboration with others, develop appropriate cognitive and academic goals for students with different abilities, disabilities, strengths, and needs; implement interventions to achieve those goals; and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. Such interventions include, but are not limited to, instructional interventions and consultation.
- 2.4 Socialization and Development of Life Skills: School psychologists have knowledge of human developmental processes, techniques to assess these processes, and direct and indirect services applicable to the development of behavioral, affective, adaptive, and social skills. School psychologists, in collaboration with others, develop appropriate behavioral, affective, adaptive, and social goals for students of varying abilities, disabilities, strengths, and needs; implement interventions to achieve those goals; and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. Such interventions include, but are not limited to, consultation, behavioral assessment/intervention, and counseling.
- 2.5 **Student Diversity in Development and Learning**: School psychologists have knowledge of individual differences, abilities, and disabilities and of the potential influence of biological, social, cultural, ethnic, experiential, socioeconomic, gender-related, and linguistic factors in development and learning. School psychologists

demonstrate the sensitivity and skills needed to work with individuals of diverse characteristics and to implement strategies selected and/or adapted based on individual characteristics, strengths, and needs.

- 2.6 **School and Systems Organization, Policy Development, and Climate**: School psychologists have knowledge of general education, special education, and other educational and related services. They understand schools and other settings as systems. School psychologists work with individuals and groups to facilitate policies and practices that create and maintain safe, supportive, and effective learning environments for children and others.
- 2.7 **Prevention, Crisis Intervention, and Mental Health**: School psychologists have knowledge of human development and psychopathology and of associated biological, cultural, and social influences on human behavior. School psychologists provide or contribute to prevention and intervention programs that promote the mental health and physical well-being of students.
- 2.8 **Home/School/Community Collaboration**: School psychologists have knowledge of family systems, including family strengths and influences on student development, learning, and behavior, and of methods to involve families in education and service delivery. School psychologists work effectively with families, educators, and others in the community to promote and provide comprehensive services to children and families.
- 2.9 **Research and Program Evaluation**: School psychologists have knowledge of research, statistics, and evaluation methods. School psychologists evaluate research, translate research into practice, and understand research design and statistics in sufficient depth to plan and conduct investigations and program evaluations for improvement of services.
- 2.10 **School Psychology Practice and Development**: School psychologists have knowledge of the history and foundations of their profession; of various service models and methods; of public policy development applicable to services to children and families; and of ethical, professional, and legal standards. School psychologists practice in ways that are consistent with applicable standards, are involved in their profession, and have the knowledge and skills needed to acquire career-long professional development.
- 2.11 **Information Technology**: School psychologists have knowledge of information sources and technology relevant to their work. School psychologists access, evaluate, and utilize information sources and technology in ways that safeguard or enhance the quality of services.

#### III, FIELD EXPERIENCES/INTERNSHIP

School psychology candidates have the opportunities to demonstrate, under conditions of appropriate supervision, their ability to apply their knowledge, to develop specific skills needed for effective school psychological service delivery, and to integrate competencies that address the domains of professional preparation and practice outlined in these standards and the goals and objectives of their training program.

- 3.1 Supervised practica and internship experiences are completed for academic credit or are otherwise documented by the institution. Closely supervised practica experiences that include the development and evaluation of specific skills are distinct from and precede culminating internship experiences that require the integration and application of the full range of school psychology competencies and domains.
- 3.2 The internship is a collaboration between the training program and field site that assures the completion of activities consistent with the goals of the training program. A written plan specifies the responsibilities of the training program and internship site in providing supervision, support, and both formative and summative performance-based evaluation of intern performance.
- 3.3 The internship is completed on a full-time basis over one year or on a half-time basis over two consecutive years. At least 600 hours of the internship are completed in a school setting.

(Note: Doctoral candidates who have met the school-based internship requirement through a specialist-level internship or equivalent experience may complete the doctoral internship in a non-school setting if consistent with program values and goals. Program policy shall specifically define equivalent experiences and explain their acceptance with regard to doctoral internship requirements.)

- 3.4 Interns receive an average of at least two hours of field-based supervision per full-time week from an appropriately credentialed school psychologist or, for non-school settings, a psychologist appropriately credentialed for the internship setting.
- 3.5 The internship placement agency provides appropriate support for the internship experience including: (a) a written agreement specifying the period of appointment and any terms of compensation; (b) a schedule of appointments, expense reimbursement, a safe and secure work environment, adequate office space, and support services consistent with that afforded agency school psychologists; (c) provision for participation in continuing professional development activities; (d) release time for internship supervision; and (e) a commitment to the internship as a diversified training experience.

#### IV. PERFORMANCE-BASED PROGRAM ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

School psychology training programs employ systematic, valid evaluation of candidates, coursework, practica, internship, faculty, supervisors, and resources and use the resulting information to monitor and improve program quality. A key aspect of program accountability is the assessment of the knowledge and capabilities of school psychology candidates and of the positive impact that interns and graduates have on services to children, youth, families, and other consumers. Further guidance regarding the assessment of candidate performance is provided in a companion NASP document, *Guidelines for Performance-based Assessment and Program Accountability and Development*.

- 4.1 Systematic, valid procedures are used to evaluate and improve the quality of the program. Different sources of process and performance information (e.g., instructional evaluation, performance portfolios, field supervisor evaluations, candidate/graduate performance on licensing/certification examinations, alumni follow-ups) are used, as appropriate, to evaluate and improve components of the program.
- 4.2 The program applies specific published criteria, both objective and qualitative, for the assessment and admission of candidates to the program at each level and for candidate retention and progression in the program. The criteria address the academic and professional competencies, as well as the professional work characteristics needed for effective practice as a school psychologist (including respect for human diversity, communication skills, effective interpersonal relations, ethical responsibility, adaptability, and initiative/dependability).
- 4.3 The program employs a systematic, valid process to ensure that all candidates, prior to the conclusion of the internship experience, are able to integrate domains of knowledge and apply professional skills in delivering a comprehensive range of services evidenced by measurable positive impact on children, youth, families, and other consumers.

# EXPANDED DESCRIPTIONS OF DOMAINS OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY TRAINING AND PRACTICE

The expanded descriptions of the "Domains of School Psychology Training and Practice" are adapted from pages 7-9 of Ysseldyke, J., Dawson, P., Lehr, C., Reschly, D., Reynolds, M. & Telzrow, C. (1997). *School Psychology: A Blueprint for Training and Practice II.* Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists. Adapted with permission of copyright holder.

2.1 Data-Based Decision-Making and Accountability: School psychologists have knowledge of varied models and methods of assessment that yield information useful in identifying strengths and needs, in understanding problems, and in measuring progress and accomplishments. School psychologists use such models and methods as part of a systematic process to collect data and other information, translate assessment results into empirically-based decisions about service delivery, and evaluate the outcomes of services. Data-based decision-making permeates every aspect of professional practice.

EXPANDED DESCRIPTION: Data-based decision-making and accountability should be the organizing theme of and permeate school psychology training and practice. School psychologists have knowledge of effective data-based decision-making and problem-solving processes. They systematically collect information to identify and define strengths and needs and use the information to make decisions, plan services, evaluate the outcomes of services, and facilitate accountability for the decisions that have been made. School psychologists collect considerable data on individual students, educational and health programs, classroom environments, and other aspects of schools and other agencies to evaluate problems and needs, assess current status, and measure the effects of a decision-making process.

School psychologists have knowledge of varied models and methods of assessment, or a process of testing, observing, and interviewing, to collect data for making decisions. They are well-versed in a variety of psychological and educational assessment methods validated for the problem area under consideration, including formal and informal test administration, behavioral assessment, curriculum-based measurement, interviews, and/or ecological or environmental assessment. They collect data about environments, including school and home, as well as cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioral factors that have a significant impact on children's school achievement and personal competence. School psychologists evaluate the components of environments that facilitate or impede learning or behavioral changes for children and identify how environmental factors and children's characteristics interact to affect academic and social/behavioral outcomes. They have knowledge of methods to link assessment results with intervention and use data to design and implement effective direct and indirect intervention services that promote children's competence and prevent difficulties or disabilities. They evaluate the outcomes of intervention services, with effectiveness determined by the relationship between the actual outcome of the interventions and the desired goals articulated in the decision-making process.

School psychologists assist school and other agency administrators with assessment and data-based decision-making designed to meet accountability responsibilities. School psychologists apply their knowledge of decision-making and problem-solving processes to broader research and systems -level problems that result in (a) identification of factors that influence learning and behavior; (b) evaluation of the outcomes of classroom, building, and system initiatives; and (c) implementation of problem solving practices designed to meet general public accountability responsibilities.

2.2 Consultation and Collaboration: School psychologists have knowledge of behavioral, mental health, collaborative, and/or other consultation models and methods and of their application to particular situations. School psychologists collaborate effectively with others in planning and decision-making processes at the individual, group, and system levels.

EXPANDED DESCRIPTION: School psychologists have knowledge of and employ effective behavioral, mental health, collaborative, and/or other consultation approaches. They apply their knowledge of consultation and collaboration in numerous situations in their practice. School psychologists function as change agents, using their knowledge and skills in consultation and collaboration to promote change at the levels of the individual student, classroom, building, district, and/or other agency. School psychologists use consultation and collaboration to facilitate development of harmonious environments in schools and other settings, to reduce the divisiveness and

disenfranchisement often found in troubled schools, and to promote the kinds of principles necessary to achieve consensus.

School psychologists have the knowledge and skills necessary to facilitate communication and collaboration with children and youth and among teams of school personnel, families, community professionals, and others. School psychologists have positive interpersonal skills and listen, adapt, address ambiguity, and are patient in difficult situations. They have knowledge of the important features of collaboration and use effective collaboration skills with individuals of diverse backgrounds and characteristics. In addition to their knowledge and skills in communication and collaboration, school psychologists clearly present and disseminate information to diverse audiences, such as parents, teachers, school boards, policy makers, community leaders, colleagues, and others in a variety of contexts.

2.3 Effective Instruction and Development of Cognitive/Academic Skills: School psychologists have knowledge of human learning processes, techniques to assess these processes, and direct and indirect services applicable to the development of cognitive and academic skills. School psychologists, in collaboration with others, develop appropriate cognitive and academic goals for students with different abilities, disabilities, strengths, and needs; implement interventions to achieve those goals; and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. Such interventions include, but are not limited to, instructional interventions and consultation.

EXPANDED DESCRIPTION: School psychologists have knowledge of learning theory and cognitive strategies and their application to the development of effective instructional strategies to promote student learning. They have knowledge of the cognitive and academic skills of students with different abilities, disabilities, strengths, and needs and of assessment and instructional strategies for use with students with diverse backgrounds and experiences. School psychologists are knowledgeable about principles of student-centered learning and use the principles to help students develop their abilities to be self-regulated learners. They assist children with developing behaviors to support effective learning, such as study skills, self-monitoring, planning/organization, and time management skills.

School psychologists have a current, professional knowledge base of empirically-demonstrated components of effective instruction and alternative instructional methodologies for students with diverse strengths and needs. They assist in implementing a variety of assessment techniques and instructional methods to enhance the learning of students at the individual, group, and systems levels. School psychologists, in collaboration with others, set individual learning goals, design a learning process to achieve those goals, and assess outcomes to determine whether the goals are achieved. School psychologists maintain current information and research about advances in curriculum and instruction and share this information and research with educators, parents, and the community at large to promote improvement in instruction and student achievement.

School psychologists help schools and other agencies develop appropriate cognitive and academic goals for all children, with variations in standards and expectations for individual students and alternative ways to monitor and assess individual student progress toward the accomplishment of goals and standards. They also assist State Education Agency and Local Education Agency personnel who design state and local accountability systems. School psychologists link assessment information to the development of instructional strategies in order to meet the individual learning needs of children. They have knowledge of and use appropriate assessment techniques to assess progress toward academic goals and assist in revising instructional methodology as necessary. They apply techniques to evaluate the extent to which the instructional or intervention strategy contributed to the outcome and to identify the factors that constitute a "successful" outcome. School psychologists are knowledgeable about and routinely use methods to assess treatment integrity (the extent to which treatment or programs are being implemented in the ways in which they were intended).

2.4 Socialization and Development of Life Skills: School psychologists have knowledge of human developmental processes, techniques to assess these processes, and direct and indirect services applicable to the development of behavioral, affective, adaptive, and social skills. School psychologists, in collaboration with others, develop appropriate behavioral, affective, adaptive, and social goals for students of varying abilities, disabilities, strengths, and needs; implement interventions to achieve those goals; and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. Such interventions include, but are not limited to, consultation, behavioral assessment/intervention, and counseling.

EXPANDED DESCRIPTION: School psychologists have a current professional knowledge base about development processes in behavioral, social, affective, and adaptive domains. They are knowledgeable about sound principles of

assessment and behavior change within these domains and apply these principles through the provision of effective consultation, behavioral assessment, intervention, and counseling services. School psychologists have knowledge of the socialization and life skills of children with different abilities, disabilities, strengths, and needs and knowledge of direct and indirect intervention strategies for use with children with diverse backgrounds and experiences.

School psychologists have knowledge and skills in consultation, behavior management, and counseling strategies that enhance appropriate student behavior. They develop methodologies, such as conflict resolution and social problem-solving/decision-making approaches, that will assist teachers and families in teaching pro-social behavior. School psychologists apply the principles of generalization and transfer of training to the development of interventions in such a way that, when appropriate, interventions can be implemented across settings (e.g., school, home, community). School psychologists provide leadership in creating environments for children that reduce alienation and foster the expression of appropriate behavior, as well as environments in which all members treat one another with respect and dignity. They assist teachers, families, and others with helping children become responsible for their own behavior. School psychologists assist parents and other adult caregivers with the development and implementation of behavior change programs in the home in order to facilitate the learning and development of their children.

School psychologists have knowledge of and facilitate the development and implementation of strategies that result in optimal instructional environments, foster learning and high rates of students' academic engaged time, and reduce the presence of factors that promote alienation and have a negative impact on children's learning and behavioral progress. School psychologists have knowledge of research on classroom climate and of ecological and behavioral approaches to classroom management. They use ecological and behavioral approaches to develop and implement behavior change programs (individual, group, classroom, etc.). They incorporate appropriate strategies when developing intervention programs to facilitate successful transitions of students from one environment to another environment. These intervention programs include program to program, early childhood to school, and school to work transitions.

School psychologists link assessment information to the development of strategies in order to address individual behavioral, affective, adaptive, and social goals for children. They have knowledge of and use appropriate assessment techniques to assess progress toward goals and assist in revising intervention strategies as necessary. They apply techniques to evaluate the extent to which the intervention strategy contributed to the outcome and to identify the factors that constitute a "successful" outcome. School psychologists are knowledgeable about and assess treatment integrity (the extent to which treatment or programs are being implemented in the ways in which they were intended).

2.5 Student Diversity in Development and Learning: School psychologists have knowledge of individual differences, abilities, and disabilities and of the potential influence of biological, social, cultural, ethnic, experiential, socioeconomic, gender-related, and linguistic factors in development and learning. School psychologists demonstrate the sensitivity and skills needed to work with individuals of diverse characteristics and to implement strategies selected and/or adapted based on individual characteristics, strengths, and needs.

EXPANDED DESCRIPTION: School psychologists recognize that students in today's schools and their families come from a variety of backgrounds. They have knowledge of the potential influences of biological, social, cultural, ethnic, experiential, socioeconomic, gender-related, and linguistic factors in children's development and learning and incorporate this knowledge when designing and implementing interventions to achieve learning and social/behavioral outcomes. School psychologists have knowledge of individual differences, abilities, and disabilities and assist with acknowledging, supporting, and integrating the activities and talents of all students into instructional programs and other settings. School psychologists recognize that experiential and linguistic differences can also result in learning difficulties and apparent disabilities for children, and they assist schools in identifying what is needed for students to succeed and what instructional or other modifications are required to address children's difficulties. School psychologists develop academic and social/behavioral interventions that reflect knowledge and understanding of children and families' cultures, backgrounds, and individual learning characteristics. School psychologists recognize that interventions most likely to succeed are adapted to the individual needs and characteristics of the students for whom they are designed.

School psychologists promote practices that help children and families of all backgrounds feel welcome and appreciated in the school and community. School psychologists recognize in themselves and others the subtle racial,

class, gender, cultural, and other biases they may bring to their work and the way these biases influence decision-making, instruction, behavior, and long-term outcomes for students.

2.6 School and Systems Organization, Policy Development, and Climate: School psychologists have knowledge of general education, special education, and other educational and related services. They understand schools and other settings as systems. School psychologists work with individuals and groups to facilitate policies and practices that create and maintain safe, supportive, and effective learning environments for children and others.

EXPANDED DESCRIPTION: School psychologists have a current professional knowledge base of school and systems structure and organization and of general education and regular education. They use their knowledge to assist schools and other agencies in designing, implementing, and evaluating policies and practices in areas such as discipline, problem-solving, instructional support, staff training, school and other agency improvement plans, program evaluation, transition plans, grading, retention, and home-school partnerships. School psychologists have knowledge of and apply effective principles of organizational development and systems theory to assist in promoting learning, preventing problems, creating climates that result in mutual respect and caring for all individuals in the system, facilitating decision-making and collaboration, and fostering a commitment to quality, effective services for all children, youth, and families.

School psychologists regularly contribute to the development of school, agency, community, and/or public policies and procedures that advocate for effective programs and services and benefit all children, youth, and families. They have the knowledge and skills to assume leadership roles in the development of systems change plans and/or public policies (e.g., state or local school improvement plans) that directly impact the programs and services available to children, youth, and their families in schools and communities and that directly impact the ways in which school psychologists deliver their services. School psychologists assist in the development of policies and procedures to ensure that schools are safe and violence free. They participate in the implementation and evaluation of programs that result in safe and violence free schools and communities.

2.7 Prevention, Crisis Intervention, and Mental Health: School psychologists have knowledge of human development and psychopathology and of associated biological, cultural, and social influences on human behavior. School psychologists provide or contribute to prevention and intervention programs that promote the mental health and physical well-being of students.

EXPANDED DESCRIPTION: School psychologists have knowledge of current theory and research about child and adolescent development; psychopathology; human diversity; biological, cultural, and social influences on behavior; societal stressors; crises in schools and communities; and other factors. They apply their knowledge of these factors to the identification and recognition of behaviors that are precursors to academic, behavioral, and serious personal difficulties (e.g., conduct disorders, internalizing disorders, drug and alcohol abuse, etc.). They have knowledge of effective prevention strategies and develop, implement, and evaluate programs based on recognition of the precursors that lead to children's severe learning and behavior problems. School psychologists have knowledge of crisis intervention and collaborate with school personnel, parents, and the community in the aftermath of crises (e.g., suicide, death, natural disasters, murder, bombs or bomb threats, extraordinary violence, sexual harassment, etc.).

School psychologists are key participants in health programs for children and promote mental health in schools and other agencies. They have knowledge of and address diverse health issues such as diet, eating disorders, teenage pregnancy, AIDS prevention, and stress management. They collaborate with other health care professionals to promote behaviors that lead to good health for children. They facilitate environmental changes that support the health and adjustment of children. They have knowledge of and routinely access resources to address a wide variety of behavioral, learning, mental, and physical problems.

2.8 Home/School/Community Collaboration: School psychologists have knowledge of family systems, including family strengths and influences on student development, learning, and behavior, and of methods to involve families in education and service delivery. School psychologists work effectively with families, educators, and others in the community to promote and provide comprehensive services to children and families.

EXPANDED DESCRIPTION: School psychologists have a current knowledge base about (a) family systems and their influences on students' cognitive, motivational, and social characteristics that affect their development and/or academic performance; (b) family involvement in education; (c) methods to promote collaboration and partnerships

between parents and educators that improve outcomes for students; (d) cultural issues that impact home-school collaboration; and (e) other family, home, and community factors that work to support learning and achievement in school. School psychologists apply this knowledge to design, implement, and evaluate programs that promote school, family, and/or community partnerships and enhance academic and behavioral goals for students. For example, school psychologists provide or collaborate with others in the development of educational and support programs that assist parents in efforts to enhance the academic and social/behavioral success of their children.

School psychologists provide support and assistance for parents when participating in school functions or activities and help them become comfortable, active, effective participants. For example, they provide support for parents when participating on special education and IEP teams, they encourage parent involvement in school wide committees and improvement teams, and they facilitate home-school communication and collaboration when problems arise. School psychologists have knowledge of and apply methods to facilitate collaboration between schools and parents in designing school curriculum and interventions for students.

School psychologists educate schools and communities regarding the influence of family involvement on children's development and achievement and advocate for parent involvement in school governance whenever feasible. They are knowledgeable about school and community resources; help create links between schools, families, and community agencies; and help coordinate services when programming for children, including multiple agencies. School psychologists work within the local system of care to provide for the health and mental health needs of children.

2.9 Research and Program Evaluation: School psychologists have knowledge of research, statistics, and evaluation methods. School psychologists evaluate research, translate research into practice, and understand research design and statistics in sufficient depth to plan and conduct investigations and program evaluations for improvement of services.

EXPANDED DESCRIPTION: School psychologists have knowledge of basic principles of research design, including single subject design and quantitative and qualitative research techniques, and apply the principles in their own research and as consumers of others' research. They differentiate acceptable from inadequate research and evaluate research in terms of its internal and external validity. They have knowledge of research and statistics in sufficient depth to evaluate published research and to plan and conduct their own investigations. They have knowledge of evaluation techniques and methods and integrate their knowledge of research, statistics, and evaluation when collecting data about school and community programs and in other program accountability activities. School psychologists have knowledge of measurement principles and psychometric standards and apply the knowledge when selecting and using assessment techniques and published tests. They review and evaluate validity research and psychometric properties when selecting the best assessment methods to use in data-based decision-making.

School psychologists maintain a professional knowledge base of research findings, professional literature, and other information relevant to their work and apply the knowledge base to all components of their work. They base their practice on sound research and translate new research findings into service delivery improvements. School psychologists have knowledge of and apply findings from intervention research when designing educational, mental health, or treatment programs for children.

School psychologists provide leadership in schools and other agencies in understanding and using research and evaluation data. They apply their knowledge and skills in statistics and measurement to assist school or agency personnel with valid interpretation and use of school and/or district data. School psychologists provide information about relevant research findings to school personnel, parents, and the public.

2.10 School Psychology Practice and Development: School psychologists have knowledge of the history and foundations of their profession; of various service models and methods; of public policy development applicable to services to children and families; and of ethical, professional, and legal standards. School psychologists practice in ways that are consistent with applicable standards, are involved in their profession, and have the knowledge and skills needed to acquire career-long professional development.

EXPANDED DESCRIPTION: School psychologists have knowledge of the standards, models, methods, and practices of their profession and apply their knowledge to all aspects of their professional services. They have knowledge of the history and foundations of school psychology, as well as psychology, education, special

education, health care, and related fields and use this understanding in work with children, parents, and professionals in schools and other agencies. They have knowledge of all appropriate ethical, professional, and legal standards, and they practice in schools and other settings in ways that meet standards, both to enhance the quality of services and to protect the rights of all parties. School psychologists promote due process guidelines in all decisions affecting students; maintain accepted standards in assessment, consultation, intervention, and general professional practice; and fulfill all legal requirements, as in response to law and court decisions. They have knowledge of the processes and procedures for public policy development. School psychologists use their knowledge of professional and legal standards to advocate for the rights and welfare of children and families and to promote new public policies and practices in schools and other settings.

School psychologists recognize that their own learning and development must continue throughout their careers. They have knowledge of and apply methods to routinely evaluate their own knowledge, professional competencies, and outcomes of their services and use their evaluation to determine specific needs for their continuing professional development. They recognize their own limitations and biases, as well as those areas in which they have training and expertise. School psychologists plan and implement systematic and effective techniques to enhance their professional development throughout their careers, and they acquire training to meet current needs in schools and other settings. School psychologists maintain certification or licensure and attend continuing professional development activities. They work with other school psychologists and school or agency staff to advocate for continuing professional development opportunities for all personnel.

# 2.11 Information Technology: School psychologists have knowledge of information sources and technology relevant to their work. School psychologists access, evaluate, and utilize information sources and technology in ways that safeguard or enhance the quality of services.

EXPANDED DESCRIPTION: School psychologists recognize that advances in technology have many positive impacts on the dissemination of information, on their professional practice, and on services for children. School psychologists use the latest technological advances in their work, but also recognize the need to use technology in ways that safeguard or enhance the quality of services. School psychologists have knowledge of information sources and technology and of methods and standards for using information technology to enhance services. School psychologists wisely use information resources such as digital medium (e.g., CD-ROM), the World Wide Web, e-mail, interactive television, distance learning technology, etc. to acquire information, current research findings, and continuing professional development. School psychologists have knowledge and skills in using word processing, spread sheets, test scoring software, and other computer resources to function more effectively and efficiently. School psychologists have current knowledge about technology resources for children (e.g., instructional software, adaptive technology for individuals with disabilities) and use the resources when designing, implementing, and evaluating instructional programs or interventions for children.

# APPENDIX A DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED IN STANDARDS FOR TRAINING AND FIELD PLACEMENT PROGRAMS IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

**Integrated, sequential program of study**- a planned sequence of related courses and field experiences designed around program goals. Course prerequisites, a required program sequence, and/or similar methods ensure candidates complete the program in a systematic, sequential manner.

**Practica**- closely supervised on-campus or field-based activities designed to develop and evaluate a school psychology candidate's mastery of distinct professional skills consistent with program and/or course goals. Practica activities may be completed as part of separate courses focusing on distinct skills or as part of a more extensive experience that covers a range of skills.

**Internship**- a supervised, culminating, comprehensive, pre-degree field experience through which school psychology candidates have the opportunity to integrate and apply professional knowledge and skills acquired in prior courses and practica, as well as to acquire new competencies consistent with training program goals.

**School setting-** a setting in which the primary goal is the education of students of diverse backgrounds, characteristics, abilities, disabilities, and needs who are enrolled in grades P-12. The school setting has available an internal or external pupil services unit that includes at least one credentialed school psychologist and provides a full range of student services.

**Program faculty**- faculty with primary teaching, supervisory, and/or administrative responsibilities in the school psychology program. Program faculty, as opposed to other faculty who may teach one or more program courses, participate in program decision-making, planning, and evaluation processes.

**Continuing professional development**- formal post-degree activities designed to enhance the knowledge and/or skills of practicing professionals or to provide opportunities to acquire new knowledge of skills.

**Residency**- a university or program requirement that a specified minimum number of credit hours be completed within a minimum time period. At the graduate level, full-time enrollment is typically defined as at least nine semester hours or the equivalent during any one semester. Thus, one academic year of "continuous" residency is typically defined as enrollment in at least nine semester hours per semester for a period of one academic year or two consecutive semesters.

**Alternative planned experiences**- planned experiences designed to accomplish many of the same goals as full-time, continuous residency. Examples include required attendance at regularly scheduled program/department seminars, participation with other candidates and faculty in professional organization meetings, participation with other candidates and faculty in ongoing research, program development and/or service activities, and similar regularly scheduled activities that provide opportunities for candidates to develop an affiliation with colleagues, faculty, and the profession.

**Institutional documentation of program completion**-"official" documentation provided by the higher education institution (or by a unit of the institution) that an individual has completed the entire required program of studies, including the internship. Institutional documentation is typically in the form of a degree or diploma, certificate of advanced graduate studies, transcript notation indicating program completion, or similar documentation.

**Degree specialization in school psychology**- a degree specifically in school psychology or a degree in an allied field (e.g., educational or counseling psychology), but with a formal, identifiable specialization in school psychology. A specialization is typically noted on the diploma or academic transcript.

**FTE**- full-time equivalent. The ratio of FTE candidates to FTE faculty consists of candidates enrolled full-time in the program to full-time program faculty, and/or a pro-rated proportion of part-time candidates and/or part-time faculty. Interns may be pro-rated based on the semester hours enrolled and the amount of supervision provided by program faculty.

**Specialist level internship or equivalent experience**- completion of a supervised internship as part of one's specialist level program or similar, supervised field experience. Experiences considered equivalent to such an internship must be defined by the program.

**Graduate semester hours**- units of graduate credit based on a semester course schedule. In cases in which a quarter schedule system is used, three quarter hours equals two semester hours. Thus, 90 quarter hours of credit are essentially equivalent to 60 semester hours.

**Public policy**- a dynamic process reflecting the nature, values, and operations of a political system such as the government or one of its subparts (e.g., schools), and includes the positive and negative consequences of government action. The process includes the establishment of priorities and the allocation and reallocation of available resources to specific plans, goals, or tasks to achieve these priorities. As such, public policy serves to create, improve, or dissolve the very systems within which school psychologists work. (Adapted from: Dye, T. R. (1995). *Understanding public policy*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.)

# **COVER SHEET**

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS
Cover sheet for program(s) in: School Psychology
Submitted by:
Address:
Date:
Chief compiler:Name
Title
PhoneFax
Email
Degree/program level(s): Specialist Doctoral
(note: separate matrix responses must be provided for each program submitted for review
Checklist of materials to be enclosed with this program report:
Background information on the program, including program philosophy, goals and objectives for candidate proficiencies and relevant policies and practices (include in appendix program handbook or comparable program/university documents that address the above items)
Number and demographic characteristics of students enrolled in program at each level (1 <sup>st</sup> year, 2 <sup>nd</sup> year, etc.) and number and demographic characteristics of graduates for past two years
Brief description of faculty qualifications that assure confidence in the preparation and judgments of candidate proficiencies (include as appendix brief summaries of program faculty, degree specializations, teaching load/assignments, rank and tenure status, and qualifications relevant to NASP standards)
Description of the program's required curriculum and field experiences that demonstrate opportunities for candidates to learn and attain the standards
Description of the program's assessment system and its use for making judgments about candidate proficiencies (include in appendix program handbook or comparable document that addresses this item)
Aggregated and summarized performance evidence from multiple sources, organized by standards. Include relevant rubrics or criteria and describe program interpretations of data and response or actions taken to strengthen programs. The following sources are <a href="required">required</a> : internship performance appraisals; state licensure exam scores or NTE Praxis II exam in school psychology; program-embedded, comprehensive, culminating performance assessment of candidates; other sources of assessment as relevant to the program
Brief statement of the program's self-evaluation of perceived strengths and deviations from national standards (include results of unit/institution accreditation evaluations, if relevant)
Special state requirements or circumstances, if any, that may be important to the program review

Program response to each standard (e.g., in "matrix" or comparable format that lists each standard, gives the program's response, and references evidence)

\_\_\_\_ Appendices to document compliance with standards, including: a) blinded transcripts/academic records of three recent program graduates; program handbook or comparable documents; documentation of curriculum/field work (e.g., syllabi, handbooks); and performance evidence

NOTE: Please refer to relevant professional association standards and related materials for further guidance on program submis sion materials.

# A Guide for Performance-Based Assessment, Accountability, and Program Development in School Psychology Training Programs

# A companion document to:

NASP Standards for Training and Field Placement Programs in School Psychology (2000)

Nancy Waldron, Joseph Prus, & Michael Curtis

National Association of School Psychologists

April, 2001

# A Guide for Performance-Based Assessment, Accountability, and Program Development in School Psychology Training Programs

#### Introduction

Educational reform initiatives have shifted the focus of American education from issues relating to process to issues relating to outcomes. Discussions of schooling have moved from emphases on process requirements, such as course credits for a diploma, to emphases on demonstrations of knowledge and performance. Standards, outcomes, and accountability are now seen as the foundation of education. Just as public school educators are grappling with these issues in relation to student achievement, assessment and instruction, faculty in higher education are also engaged in a process of reconsidering the preparation of professionals from a similar perspective. (Cobb, 1995)

The restructuring of professional preparation programs in education has focused on continuous assessment of performance-based standards that define what graduates must know and be able to do. It is thus important that programs establish linkages among (1) training standards that specify professional competencies, (2) continuous performance-based assessment of both individual candidates and program outcomes, and (3) requirements for state and national certification/licensure that focus on the demonstration of professional skills. (Wise & Leibrand, 1996)

Over the last twenty years, national accreditation standards have continued to move away from emphases on input and process variables and to give more attention to critical professional competencies and outcomes which reflect the knowledge and skills that a new professional should demonstrate at the completion of a training program. The most recent criteria of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2001) reflect substantial movement in the direction of performance-based accreditation. To add further emphasis to this movement and to assist professional education units, NCATE's Specialty Area Studies Board, which represents 20 national professional specialty organizations including NASP, developed *Principles for Performance-Based Assessment Systems in Professional Education Programs* (NCATE, 2000).

The current version of *Standards for Training and Field Placement Programs in School Psychology* (NASP, 2000) mirrors the changes reflected in the new NCATE standards, and in the national movement in the preparation of education professionals. Moreover, requirements relating to

performance-based accountability are not new to NASP standards. The previous version of the training standards (NASP, 1994) required programs to demonstrate how they ensured that all graduates were able to demonstrate positive, measurable change with regard to the educational or mental health needs of children and youth. The most recent NASP standards for school psychology training programs (2000) have moved further away from emphasizing program curriculum and course offerings, to an even greater focus on demonstrations by programs that they are preparing candidates with critical professional knowledge and skills reflected in the domains of professional practice.

## **Purpose of the Guide**

This guide was developed as a companion document to Standards for Training and Field Placement Programs in School Psychology (NASP, 2000). The purpose of this document is to provide school psychology training programs with guidelines and suggested practices in the area of performance-based assessment and accountability. A framework is presented that will assist programs with the development of a comprehensive, program-based system of performance assessment and accountability that can be used to evaluate the competencies of all school psychology candidates and graduates.

Our foremost intent is for the standards and associated review process to provide a sound basis for program development and evaluation that ensures the quality preparation of school psychologists, and that facilitates the provision of effective school psychological services for the children, youth, families, and others served by our profession.

The topics addressed in this guide include:

- Methods that a program might employ to assess the competencies and performance of school psychology candidates and graduates.
- Guidelines and suggested practices for developing or improving a comprehensive system of candidate and program assessment.
- Information about program review and documentation/evidence that will be required of all school psychology programs.

# Assessment of Individual Candidate Competencies and Performance

School psychology is well situated to respond to performance-based training standards, accreditation procedures that emphasize program responsibility to demonstrate candidate competency, and the increasing use of knowledge-based tests and performance-based assessments to attain certification and licensure. NASP has maintained a national certification system that includes a performance-based component since 1988, and has included requirements for program assessment and accountability in its training standards since 1994. Additionally, school psychology programs have long required extensive field-based experiences (practica and internship) that provide a context for the development and assessment of professional skills. However, past emphasis has been on the processes and inputs associated with such training opportunities. School psychology programs, as well as other professional preparation programs, now are being encouraged to consider a broader array of methods for assessing and documenting outcomes. Thus, assessment methods utilized by programs should provide opportunities for candidates to demonstrate both what they know, and what they can do.

School psychology faculty, by virtue of their expertise in assessment and individual differences, are uniquely qualified to bring this knowledge to bear on the consideration of candidate performance in graduate training programs. The considerations are similar to those that we remind our own students about when conducting an individual assessment of a learner: awareness of the purpose of the assessment, selection of appropriate and technically adequate assessment procedures, consideration of the consequences of assessment, and linking assessment results to intended outcomes.

As we know, assessment is best conducted through multiple sources of information and multiple methods of gathering data. Specific assessment measures should be selected on the basis of factors such as:

- Reliability, validity, and utility.
- The need for multiple methods that represent multiple data sources, multiple environments,
   and the assessment of multiple domains.
- The need for methods that allow assessment across time, and provide continuous monitoring of progress toward desired goals and outcomes.

Assessment procedures that reflect these same characteristics are those that should be evident in school psychology training programs. Various methods that programs might employ when assessing the competencies and performance of individual school psychology candidates are subsequently presented. As programs consider a range of assessment procedures, choices should be made to use methods that are best suited to the training philosophy, institutional context, and desired outcomes of an individual program. The methods presented here are particularly useful for evaluating candidate performance and may often serve as a form of culminating assessment. It is recognized that each school psychology training program is likely to have a different set of assessment methods to reflect unique features and competencies that are emphasized.

Specific assessment methods that programs might wish to consider are examinations, performance appraisals, case studies, simulations, portfolios, candidate and graduate questionnaires, exit interviews, and surveys of supervisors, employers, and other external constituents. Each assessment method will be briefly described, along with some considerations that may influence its use in a school psychology preparation program.

#### **Examinations**

There are various examination options available to school psychology programs to assess candidate knowledge. Examinations may be designed to assess knowledge specific to individual courses and topics, or to assess the synthesis and integration of knowledge areas within the program or as reflected in national and/or state professional standards. Examinations are often locally developed, and thus have a clear relationship to the program curriculum. Locally-developed examinations frequently used in school psychology training programs are comprehensive or qualifying examinations, and oral examinations. While having many strengths, locally-developed examinations may not sufficiently address issues of external validity. Thus, another examination option used by school psychology programs is standardized national and/or state examinations. These examinations typically reflect content consistent with national and/or state standards, and provide a reference group comparison that programs may choose to use as one piece of information about individual candidate performance.

# **Performance Appraisals**

This form of assessment allows for an overt demonstration of skills, often in authentic or real-life

situations. Performance appraisals assess skill development and attainment; and thus the application and generalization of knowledge and skills to specific settings and situations. While authentic settings and demonstration of skills are powerful factors, it is critical that performance appraisals include specific and operational criteria for observing and evaluating the performance of a candidate. Within school psychology programs, performance appraisals are often embedded in courses that address professional skill development in areas such as assessment, consultation, and intervention, as well as in practica and internship requirements. Some examples include: faculty and field supervisor observations of candidates working with clients in field sites; video or audiotapes of candidate sessions with clients that are later evaluated by an instructor; candidates completing self-appraisals of specific skills in areas such as interviewing, test administration, and counseling through the use of a standard evaluation system that specifies performance criteria; and field supervisors evaluating candidate performance over a designated period of time through the use of a practicum or internship evaluation form.

#### **Case Studies**

Case studies, or in-depth descriptions of referred cases and associated services and outcomes in authentic settings, are another means to assess the application of knowledge and professional skill development, along with broad or specific issues of professional practice. Case studies can also serve to evaluate reasoning, in-depth understanding, and integration of knowledge, and as a means of assessing knowledge and practice skills. The use of cases that involve complex child and youth issues, as well as the integration of skills across various areas such as assessment, consultation, and intervention may be part of a culminating evaluation of program candidates.

Because cases vary substantially in terms of referring issues, client characteristics/needs, service settings, and other issues, it is important for programs to provide candidates with parameters/requirements for case studies. Such requirements might address client age ranges, types of referring questions or issues, types of service provision (e.g., assessment, counseling, behavioral analysis/intervention, consultation), and requirements for assessing outcomes. Examples of case studies may be helpful in illustrating expectations. It is also important that candidates be provided with criteria or rubrics by which case studies will be evaluated. Such rubrics or criteria will vary depending on the case study requirements.

#### **Simulations**

Direct assessment of skills in authentic settings is not always possible. Therefore, the use of simulations that approximate "real life" events and settings offer an alternative means of assessing candidate competencies. Within school psychology programs, simulations are frequently used as a precursor to actual practice in the field. This allows for a "low risk" application and integration of knowledge and skills to cases that approximate professional practice. Other major advantages of simulations are that they can standardize assessments across candidates (i.e., all candidates can be exposed to the same case), and assess candidate response to low probability but important events such as ethical dilemmas and crisis situations. It is for these reasons that simulations may be useful as part of comprehensive examinations or other culminating assessments.

#### **Portfolios**

Portfolios that include candidate work samples are frequently used in school psychology programs as a method of culminating assessment presented and evaluated at the end of a program. The contents of a portfolio can be chosen to reflect developing knowledge, skills, and professional competencies; they can also be chosen to reflect "best work" and the attainment of specified professional competencies. The work samples or products most frequently found in school psychology program portfolios are: practica products/cases; internship products/cases; course-related products; field site/internship supervisor evaluations; self-reflection statements; research project; and resumes (Prus & Martin, 2000). When considering the specific products or cases that portfolios include from practica and internship, the following professional competencies may be addressed: assessment, consultation, behavior analysis/intervention, counseling, research, training/in-service, prevention, and supervision.

Critical aspects of using portfolios as a candidate assessment measure are providing specific detail about the type of products to be included, and providing evaluation criteria that will be applied to the portfolio products. Given the diversity of products in many portfolios, it is often necessary to develop multiple evaluation criteria (e.g., one for assessment and intervention cases, another for inservice presentations, and another for research papers).

#### **Candidate and Graduate Questionnaires**

Another means of assessing the competency of candidates and graduates is to engage them in reflection through the use of questionnaires that address the components of the preparation program, professional competencies, and professional goals. It must be recognized that these questionnaires are designed to assess perceptions and opinions, not observed behavior or demonstration of knowledge and skills. While self-report data should be interpreted cautiously, it may serve as an excellent source of information regarding the correspondence across program goals and objectives, faculty perceptions, and candidate/graduate perceptions. Questionnaires should be carefully developed to allow for this triangulation of data sources, and thus inform individual candidate assessment and future program development efforts.

#### **Exit Interviews**

Interviews conducted by faculty at the end of a candidate's program allow for individualization of questions and follow-up probes that are not possible on a written questionnaire or survey. While a standard interview protocol should be used with all candidates, flexibility is needed to clarify and expand on ideas and issues that arise during the interview. Exit interviews often include the same content as student and graduate questionnaires, but allow for personal interaction. This interaction may serve to encourage responses from some candidates, and inhibit responses from others. To ensure consistency in content and the best probability of effective student-faculty interaction, school psychology programs should carefully consider which faculty are to conduct exit interviews. There are also alternative ways to complete an exit interview, such as conducting telephone interviews, having candidates complete a brief questionnaire first and then discuss responses during a shorter interview session, and randomly selecting a sample of students to interview.

## Surveys of Supervisors, Employers, and Other External Constituents

While faculty in school psychology programs are often the primary evaluators of a candidate's professional competency, the perspective that external constituents bring to the assessment process is often unique and valuable. Through the process of surveying practicum supervisors, internship supervisors, and employers, a school psychology program is able to obtain a measure of how well candidates generalize knowledge and skills to a field setting and perform independently. This input

provides multiple perspectives, and offers an element of objectivity that programs may not achieve when only considering the perspectives of faculty and students within the program. A frequent by-product of requesting input from external constituents is that collaborative relationships are established and reinforced which serve to enhance the program and the efforts of faculty.

It is important that evaluation criteria or rubrics for performance assessment methods such as case studies, simulations, and portfolios be operationalized and communicated to candidates as a clear indication of program expectations. Programs may choose to provide candidates with samples of completed work or specific products that clearly convey such expectations. Once criteria have been developed, efforts should be made to establish inter-rater reliability through the use of multiple raters for each product. While school psychology program faculty are most often involved in the evaluation of case studies or portfolios, programs may also choose to involve other individuals, such as field supervisors, in the process.

As programs consider these various methods, it is clear that assessment of candidates must go beyond simple indicators of achievement such as course grades and overall GPA. The assessment methods chosen must be consistent with stated program goals and objectives, and reflect candidate competencies in professional practice domains. Moreover, assessment must be based on multi-method and multi-source approaches that are used throughout the candidate's preparation, as well as culminating evidence demonstrating competencies upon completion of the program. Thus, not only are courses and required activities completed, but competencies are demonstrated in the domains of professional practice and other areas emphasized by the program. For example, in one school psychology program the selected assessment procedures may include course examinations, observations and evaluation of practicum activities, a written comprehensive examination, supervisor evaluation of internship performance, and the presentation of a professional portfolio at the completion of internship. A second school psychology program may use course examinations, observations and evaluation of practicum activities, completion of a series of case studies, supervisor evaluation of internship performance, and an exit interview with program faculty. As school psychology programs expand the methods used to assess candidate competency and performance, consideration must be given to how these various methods and approaches are integrated into a comprehensive system of assessment.

# Characteristics of Performance-Based Program Assessment and Accountability

School psychology programs must consider how the individual assessment approaches selected for use with program candidates reflect a comprehensive system of assessment for the program. A system of assessment has distinct characteristics and serves to not only inform the program of individual candidate performance, but also provides an opportunity for programs to consider assessment data across multiple candidates. This is one means of program evaluation that can inform program development efforts. The following section will present critical features and characteristics of a performance-based system of assessment, and discuss the application of such a system to school psychology programs.

NCATE Specialty Area Studies Board Principles for Performance-Based Assessment Systems in Professional Education Programs (2000) establishes certain qualities that should characterize a comprehensive, performance-based system. According to those principles, each program will have a comprehensive system of assessment, accountability, and program development that:

- Is clearly delineated in program policy, and is consistent with stated program philosophy and goals.
- Uses multiple measures of knowledge and skills.
- Embeds assessment activities in the program in meaningful ways.
- Uses assessment methods on a continuous basis, throughout the program.
- Identifies, evaluates, and communicates benchmarks of performance (unsatisfactory, acceptable, superior) in the program and across competency areas to school psychology candidates.
- Complements program assessment information with information available from external sources.
- Aggregates assessment information across candidates and graduates to inform program development and improvement.

What are the implications of these principles for a school psychology program?

- Each program is encouraged to develop an assessment and evaluation system to provide
  comprehensive information on each candidate's proficiency in relation to the performancebased standards. There is no single way to assure that candidates meet the performancebased standards, or to judge candidate mastery of the standards at acceptable levels of
  proficiency.
- An assessment and evaluation system should be implemented that ensures that all school
  psychology candidates have acquired and demonstrated the requisite knowledge and
  professional competencies identified by the program in accordance with the domains of
  professional practice.
- A program should demonstrate a multi-method approach, using multiple data sources, and
  multiple environments, in the assessment of candidate/intern competencies and the ability of
  candidates to bring about positive impact on children and youth.
- 4. Programs are to describe the system of assessment and to demonstrate the relationship between that system and program goals and philosophy. The assessment methods should be tied to program goals and objectives, have specific operational criteria that are applied, and involve both the faculty and intern supervisors or others in
- 5. Evidence should be provided that the program systematically uses individual candidate assessment data and other evaluation information for programmatic self-evaluation and improvement. To demonstrate the use of assessment information, programs are encouraged to summarize and aggregate data from designated assessment procedures. This might be done by summarizing results as averages, range of responses, modal responses, examples of written responses, and/or other forms of data analysis. The program should demonstrate how it makes use of these data to regularly revise the program and assure that *all* candidates meet the standards for proficiency in the recognized areas of professional practice.
- 6. The assessment system must be integrated into the learning experiences of the program and not merely represent a series of course evaluation activities, or unrelated, add-on tasks that are not explicitly tied to program objectives and outcomes. The results of the assessment system should be helpful to individual candidates, program operation and revision, and for meeting program approval requirements.

7. The performance-based assessment and accountability system should be an assessment plan for both individual candidates and the program. This assessment plan specifies assessment and evaluation activities, their link to the national training standards, and how the program conceptualizes a system of assessment for the program to not only assure individual candidate competencies but also inform ongoing program development and improvement.

# **Program Review and Docume ntation**

The adoption of *Standards for Training and Field Placement Programs in School Psychology* (NASP, 2000), with an emphasis on performance-based standards, places a greater responsibility on school psychology programs to describe and document program goals and outcomes. It is the responsibility of the program to "make the case" that its policies and practices are consistent with the standards and that its candidates are prepared to provide a comprehensive range of school psychological services consistent with the standards. Documentation of program requirements, a system of assessment and program development, and evidence demonstrating proficient candidate performance is a critical part of the program review and approval process. The review process is conducted to answer the question:

Is the program preparing school psychologists with the knowledge and skills necessary to provide a comprehensive range of school psychological services that positively impact children, youth, families, and other consumers?

Each training program undergoing review will provide specific evidence of how the NASP Standards for Training and Field Placement Programs in School Psychology(2000) are being met. The standards can be organized into two major types: programmatic standards and candidate performance standards. The programmatic standards include: Standard I - Program Context/Structure; Standard III - Field Experiences/Internship; Standard IV - Performance-based Program Assessment and Accountability; and Standard V - Program Support/Resources. The candidate performance standard is Standard II: Domains of School Psychology Training and Practice, which includes 11 specific domains. These domains are:

- Data-based decision-making and accountability
- Consultation and collaboration

- Effective instruction and development of cognitive/academic skills
- Socialization and development of life skills
- Student diversity in development and learning
- School and systems organization, policy development and climate
- Prevention, crisis intervention, and mental health
- Home/school/community collaboration
- Research and program evaluation
- School psychology practice and development
- Information technology

Given the two types of standards, there is specific evidence needed to address the programmatic standards (Standards I, III, IV, V) that differs somewhat from the evidence needed to address the candidate performance standard (Standard II). The following sections describe various types of evidence and discuss how such evidence will be evaluated as part of the program review process.

#### **Programmatic Standards and Associated Evidence**

Programmatic standards (Standards I, III, IV, and V) are intended to assure consistency in the opportunities afforded students in a program and to assure that training processes are consistent with national standards. These standards require that programs provide policy and practice documentation. Documentation of pertinent *policy* is needed to show that a requirement has been "institutionalized" and thus applies to all candidates in the program. Evidence of *practice* is needed to demonstrate that the actual preparation of candidates is carried out in a manner consistent with stated program requirements and the relevant NASP standard(s). The only exception to this requirement is Standard V where documentation of policy *or* practice alone is sufficient to meet the standard. It should be noted that Standard V does not require a response from programs in institutions that are NCATE accredited or are undergoing NCATE review.

The following are examples of the types of policy and practice documentation that a program may submit. Note that some forms of documentation are required of all programs, while other forms are at the program's discretion.

# Examples of policy documentation:

- Program handbook or comparable document(s) that describe the program's philosophy/conceptual framework, goals/objectives, required curriculum, and policies (REQUIRED)
- Description of the program's system of candidate and program assessment and accountability (REQUIRED)
- Relevant section(s) of the institution's graduate catalog or bulletin
- Practica/internship handbook(s)
- Minutes of faculty/program meetings

## Examples of practice documentation:

- Blinded transcripts or academic records of three recent (i.e., within the past academic year)
   program graduates (REQUIRED)
- Student programs of studies
- Syllabi
- Practica and internship performance evaluation forms
- Intern logs/summaries
- Agreements with field sites specifying internship practices/requirements
- Minutes of faculty meetings
- Program annual reports

#### **Performance Standards and Associated Evidence**

Performance standards (Standard II), are expressed in terms of "Domains of School Psychology Training and Practice." These performance standards are intended to assure that training outcomes are consistent with national standards, and that program candidates/graduates are able to provide effective school psychological services that positively impact children, youth, families, and other consumers.

The documentation/evidence that is needed to respond to each candidate performance standard is different than what is required for the programmatic standards. Documentation/evidence for Standard

II will consist of "AAA Evidence", or evidence that each domain is addressed, assessed, and attained in the program. These are described more fully below.

Addressed

How does the program provide the knowledge and skills necessary for the development of competencies in a domain? To respond to this question in each domain area, evidence provided by a program might include: program goals/objectives; transcripts; course and practica syllabi; and internship requirements.

Assessed

How does the program assess and monitor the development of candidate competency in a domain? Evidence might include: course and practica evaluation requirements; practica evaluation forms; documentation of the program assessment and monitoring system for individual candidates.

Attained

How does the program determine that candidates/graduates have attained acceptable competence in a domain? Evidence might include: internship performance appraisal results; a summary of results on state/national school psychology licensing examinations; results from other culminating assessments; and results from alumni and/or employer surveys.

The following are examples of the types of performance documentation that a program might submit. Note that some forms of documentation are required of all programs, while other forms are at the program's discretion. A sample program response in Appendix B illustrates how one program may respond to one of the "Domains of Training and Practice".

Examples of performance documentation:

- Summary of field supervisor performance appraisals of recent (e.g., for the two years prior to program review) interns (REQUIRED)
- Summary of performance of recent (e.g., for the two years prior to program review) candidates/graduates on the state school psychology credentialing examination or on the national

examination (National Teachers Examination Praxis II examination in school psychology) (REQUIRED)

- Summary of the results of at least one program-embedded, comprehensive, culminating performance-based measure (e.g., case studies, portfolio) (REQUIRED)
- Candidate surveys/exit interview results
- Results of alumni and/or employer surveys
- Other evidence that program candidates/graduates attain the "Domains of School Psychology
   Training and Practice" as set forth in Standard II.

Please note that it is necessary to provide not just the results of program assessment methods, but also the requirements and corresponding criteria/rubrics. For example, if the program assesses all candidates using a case study approach, then the requirements for the case study, the criteria/rubric used to judge the case study, a summary of results, and the program's interpretation of the results should be provided. Other standards (e.g., Standard IV) require that the program demonstrate as part of its assessment system that it not only assesses and documents results, but uses the results to evaluate and improve the program. This is a critical aspect of program development and accountability.

#### **Summary of Required Documentation/Evidence**

In summary, the following types of documentation/evidence are *required* as part of the NASP program review process:

- Program handbook(s) or comparable document(s) that describe the program's philosophy/conceptual framework, goals/objectives, required curriculum, and policies.
- University and/or department policies relevant to school psychology program and standards (if not included in the program handbook).
- Description of the program's system of candidate/program assessment and accountability (if not included in the program handbook).
- Transcripts/academic records of three recent (within the year prior to the review) program graduates.

- Evidence that the program addresses and assesses the domains of school psychology training and practice, which may include program goals/objectives, course/practica syllabi, and internship requirements and associated evaluation forms/methods.
- Summary of the results of at least one program embedded, comprehensive, culminating, performance-based measure.
- Summary of recent (e.g., for the two years prior to program review) candidate state school psychology licensure/certification examination performance or, in the absence of any such state requirement, performance on the NTE Praxis II Exam in School Psychology.
- Summary of field supervisor evaluations of recent interns (e.g., for the two years prior to program review).
- At the discretion of the program, other evidence that program candidates/graduates attain the domains of school psychology practice and training as set forth in the training standards.
- Evidence that the program uses the results of assessment for purposes of program evaluation and improvement.

# The Evaluation of Program Evidence

The NASP program review process involves the careful evaluation of program evidence in relation to national standards. This process is described more fully in *Program Approval Board Policies and Procedures*, available from NASP. As part of the program review process, each standard is evaluated using the following criteria:

Adequately Addressed The program has presented documentation/evidence that clearly establishes that the standard is met.

Not Adequately Addressed The evidence provided by the program to document a standard is incomplete, unclear, or did not address the standard.

Noncompliance The evidence provided is inconsistent with the standard, or otherwise indicates that the standard is not met.

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Adherence to critical standards, and to the preponderance of standards, is needed in order to

attain NASP approval and NCATE "Nationally Recognized Program" status.

Conclusion

The purpose of this document was to provide school psychology programs with guidelines and

suggested practices for performance-based assessment and accountability. It will hopefully serve as a

useful starting point for program self-evaluation and development as well as a stimulant for further

development and research within our field.

For further information and materials on the NASP program review process and associated

policies and procedures, please contact the chair of the Program Approval Board or the Manager for

Professional Standards at:

**NASP** 

4340 East West Highway Suite 402

Bethesda, MD 20814

Phone: 301-657-0270

Web: www.naspweb.org

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#### APPENDIX A

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education NCATE Specialty Area Studies Board

Principles for Performance-Based Assessment Systems in Professional Education Programs

March, 2000

Assessing what professional educator candidates know and can do is critical to implementing the performance-based standards of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and its affiliated national professional specialty organizations. Given the complexities of teaching and other educational professions, the range of knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be assessed, the multiple purposes for which assessment results are used, and the stakes associated with the outcomes, assessment in professional education programs and units needs to include multiple measures implemented on a systematic and ongoing basis as part of a comprehensive system. This document outlines principles set forth by the NCATE Specialty Area Studies Board for performance-based assessment systems at the program level.

Although assessment systems will vary across programs and units, they generally should a) address the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be acquired by professional educator candidates as set forth in program goals; b) be consistent with the standards of relevant national and state accrediting/approval bodies; c) have multiple means for measuring candidate performance and impact; and d) provide on-going, systematic information useful for decision-making. It is particularly critical that assessment systems provide credible results that are collected and used in a fair, valid manner consistent with their intended purpose(s).

Assessment systems should have the following characteristics:

- 1. The system is driven by a conceptual framework and program values which espouse assessment as a vehicle for both individual and program self-evaluation and improvement. Assessment is planned and implemented by key stakeholders in a manner consistent with the method of inquiry in the discipline and is considered a means to an end rather than an end in itself.
- 2. The system includes components which work together in a synergistic manner to address the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of candidates across program goals, objectives and curriculum consistent with the performance-based standards of the respective national professional specialty. Assessment is a goal-oriented process linked to program purposes/goals and national standards.
- 3. Multiple measures are planned and administered on a systematic, ongoing basis throughout the program beginning with the admissions process. The system includes quantitative and qualitative measures useful for formative and summative assessment. One or more measures designed to yield evidence of positive candidate impact on students is included in the system.
- 4. The system includes one or more measures which have been created, reviewed, and/or scored by

specialty professionals external to the program. Such professionals include those

with relevant specialized expertise whose primary responsibility is not to the program/unit, such as field-based master teachers, clinical teachers, intern supervisors, and/or supervisors/employers of program candidates/graduates.

- 5. The system is clearly delineated. Measures and associated criteria or rubrics (including minimal proficiency levels), as well as policies and practices for obtaining and using results, are described in program documents in a manner which candidates and other stakeholders can understand. Candidates are made aware of program standards and assessment requirements to which they will be held and are provided with models and/or examples of performance and the instruction and support needed to attain such levels.
- 6. The assessment methods and corresponding criteria included in the system are sufficiently comprehensive and rigorous to make important decisions about the proficiencies of candidates and to safeguard those they may potentially serve. Critical decision-making points are delineated in the system. Decisions that are made reflect the application of relevant criteria and use of results in a manner which discriminates acceptable versus unacceptable performance.
- 7. The system includes policies and procedures for the gathering, use, storage, and reporting of individual results. Such policies address the rights of individuals (e.g., those afforded candidates by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; confidentiality/anonymity of survey responses). Individual candidate results are reported in a clear manner which acknowledges the source(s) and limitations of the data, individual strengths, and areas of needed or potential improvement.
- 8. The system includes a structure and procedures for sampling, analyzing, summarizing, and reporting aggregated results. Data are gathered on an ongoing basis and are summarized in a manner which reflects pass rates, the range of performances, and/or the "typical" or "average" performance (e.g., mean, median, or modal performance) as appropriate to the types of measures. Summaries of results are provided to key program stakeholders in a clear manner which acknowledges the source(s) and limitations of the data, data collection and reporting time frame, program strengths, and areas of needed or potential improvement.
- 9. The program and its assessment system foster the use of results for individual candidate and program improvement. Assessment results are regularly reviewed in relation to program goals and objectives as well as to relevant state and national standards and stimulate changes designed to optimize success.
- 10. The system has a mechanism and procedures for evaluating and improving itself and its component assessment methods. Evidence of the reliability and validity of the system and its component measures is gathered and used to make decisions about their ongoing use and/or revision. Evidence should address the ability of the system to comprehensively assess performance in a credible manner which is valid, fair, and unbiased.

## **Sample Program Response**

The following sample demonstrates how a program might respond to selected standards under the "Domains of School Psychology Training and Practice" (Standard II). The sample reflects the need to show that the program *addresses*, *assesses*, *and attains* (in candidates/graduates) each domain. Please note that the intent of the statement is to clarify program policies and practices and to direct the reader to the appropriate documentation/evidence contained in the program's submission. The statement, in itself, is not sufficient to document that the standard is met. The program must provide *evidence* that the standard is met.

Please note that the statements, and the types of referenced documentation/evidence, are for illustrative purposes only. With the exception of certain forms of required documentation/evidence (e.g., blinded candidate transcripts, summary of internship field supervisor evaluations, etc.) each program is expected to submit evidence that reflects its own training and associated documentation.

## 2.3 Effective Instruction and Development of Cognitive/Academic Skills

Response: As can be seen in program goals and objectives (see *Program Handbook*, p. 4 in Appendix A), knowledge of human learning processes, methods of assessing such processes, and direct and indirect interventions appropriate for students of diverse abilities, disabilities, strengths, and needs are substantially addressed in the program. Required courses in human cognition and learning (PSYC 508), and exceptional children (PSYC 512) provide a the psychological and educational foundations for this domain area. More skill-based courses in psychoeducational assessment for intervention (PSYC 608 & 609), curriculum-based assessment and academic intervention (PSYC 607), reading (READ 561) and consultation (PSYC 618) assure that students acquire the knowledge and skills needed to conduct assessments using diverse models and methods and to plan and evaluate interventions aimed at cognitive and academic skills. The program's required curriculum can be found on page 76 of the graduate catalog (Appendix B) and on page 8 of the *Program Handbook*. Required courses are reflected on the three blinded student transcripts contained in Appendix C. Course syllabi showing content coverage and associated course-embedded assessment of candidates are included in numerical order in Appendix D.

An emphasis on diverse models and methods of assessment and on linking assessment to direct and indirect interventions for cognitive and academic skills can also be seen in the program's practica and internship requirements (see Appendix E for practica and internship syllabi and evaluation instruments). Practica and internship evaluation methods show that candidates are assessed on their ability to assess students cognitive and academic abilities using a variety of methods, translate results into empirically-based recommendations, plan and implement interventions aimed at academic and cognitive skills, and evaluate the outcomes of services. Please note that the requirements for all interns also include serving on a school-based or comparable intervention team and working collaboratively with others to plan academic interventions for diverse student populations.

Culminating attainment of this domain is measured primarily through the program's comprehensive examination, which consists of "case study" and similar application questions (see *Program Handbook*, p. 18 for description of examination and corresponding grading processes/criteria), internship field supervisor evaluations (see Appendix F for summary of results for past two academic years), and a portfolio review conducted by program faculty (see *Program Handbook*, p. 20 for portfolio requirements and scoring rubric, and Appendix G for summary of portfolio results for recent graduates). Additional data collected via the program's semi-annual employer survey (see Appendix H) confirm that our graduates are viewed as possessing the assessment and intervention skills needed to contribute to effective instruction and development of cognitive/academic skills for students with diverse characteristics and needs.